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Social and human rights questions: human rights

Letter dated 28 July 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement delivered by the representative of the Russian Federation at the coordination and management meeting of the Economic and Social Council under the agenda item entitled "Social and human rights questions: human rights" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Economic and Social Council, under agenda item 19 (f).

(Signed) V. **Churkin**

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Annex to the letter dated 28 July 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement delivered by the representative of the Russian Federation at the coordination and management meeting of the Economic and Social Council on agenda item 19, "Social and human rights questions", sub-item (f), "Human rights"

26 July 2016

Mr. President,

As the Council considers agenda item 19, "Social and human rights questions", sub-item (f), "Human rights", we wish to take the opportunity to draw attention to the following.

We note the practice of expansive interpretation by members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of States parties' obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We refer in particular to general comment No. 22 on the right to sexual and reproductive health. We consider it unacceptable for the treaty bodies to use in their recommendations controversial terms and concepts that are not supported by the majority of countries.

We believe that such comments are the personal opinions of the Committee experts and cannot impose on States any obligations beyond those that they undertook when they became parties to the Covenant. In that context we do not consider ourselves bound by obligations to introduce programmes aimed at providing so-called comprehensive sexuality education to children, either within or outside school, since it is the family that bears the primary responsibility for providing sexual education to children.

We also wish to address the effectiveness of the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. We consider that the effective functioning of the system of human rights treaty bodies is contingent upon their strict adherence to their mandate and also on constructive and mutually respectful dialogue with States parties.

The main task of the Committee, as of other treaty bodies, is to provide assistance to States in meeting their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The recommendations of experts following consideration of the periodic reports of States parties on their implementation of the Convention should not exceed the Committee's authority.

We note the lack of equitable geographical representation and the impossibility of evenly distributing the relevant expertise of Committee members when reports are considered in dual chambers — a measure introduced by the Committee in order to eliminate the backlog in the consideration of periodic reports.

With regard to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on early warning and economic, social and cultural rights, we cannot agree with the assertion in the report that an adverse human rights situation is a key factor in increased social unrest and modern-day conflicts. In most cases, armed conflicts are the result of outside interference in States' affairs. However, the impact

of conflicts, in particular terrorist threats, on the enjoyment of human rights is an increasingly pertinent issue.

Concerning the rights of indigenous peoples and the staging of major sporting events, these are not, in our view, directly relevant to the subject of the aforementioned report.

We wish to warn the Office of the High Commissioner against promoting various ideas for reform, such as the inclusion of a human rights component in all areas of United Nations activity and the development of indicators, including under the Human Rights Up Front initiative, without consulting Member States. States should have the final say, and the Secretariat should not attempt to supplant them.

Thank you for your attention.